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ABSTRACT

Neither conservative nor liberal social policy has offered substantial or sustained benefits for black families. Social policy determines the overall impact of social and economic conditions on society's members, especially economically disadvantaged families. Liberal policies, procedures, and assumptions underlying social and economic programs in the 1960s and 1970s contributed to the disintegration of black two-parent and extended families, an increase in black families headed by women, and the decline of other important black institutions. Social and economic programs and civil rights legislation could not effectively remove the social barriers that prevent full participation in mainstream society. Their results were modest economic gains, adverse effects on two-parent families, and the perpetuation of the misconception that the failure to overcome social and economic obstacles is a function of individual rather than institutional shortcomings. Conservative policies of the 1980s have resulted in a resurgence of extended families, an increase in individuals with no familial structures, and continued increase in the rate of family break-ups. The extent to which black families are able to reach social and economic parity with white families will be determined by a comprehensive national social policy that incorporates the black community, the federal government, and the private sector. A list of references accompanies each chapter. The appendix includes 28 tables of statistical data. A 154-item bibliography and an index are also included. (FMW)

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